

CITY OF ROCKVILLE PLANNING DIVISION
STAFF REPORT

June 3, 2004

SUBJECT:

Special Exception Application SPX2004-00344 –Wootton High School
Special Exception Application SPX2004-00345 – Twinbrook Elementary School

Applicant: John Kim
JK Architects & Associates
937C Russell Ave
Gaithersburg, MD- 20879

For: Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Planning Commission Review Date:
June 9, 2004

Board of Appeals Public Hearing Date:
July 10, 2004

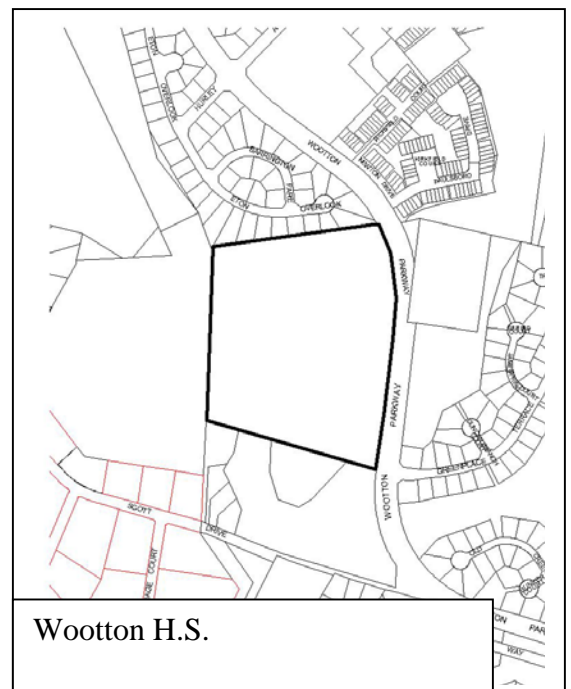
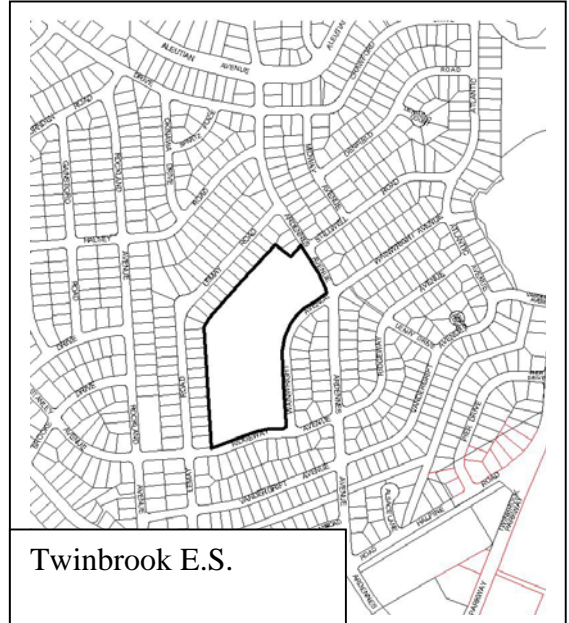
REQUEST:

The applicant submits the subject special exception requests in accordance with Section 25-296 of the City of Rockville Zoning Ordinance. The applicant seeks special exception approval to install modular classroom buildings on the referenced public school sites, for the academic 2004-05 school year. Wootton High School is located in the R-150 (Medium Density Residential) Zone. Twinbrook Elementary School is located in the R-60 (Single Family Detached, Residential) Zone.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approval is recommended subject to the following conditions:

1. All modular classroom buildings subject to the referenced special exception requests must be duly inspected for applicable building and safety code compliance and obtain occupancy



permits from the City of Rockville Inspection Services Division.

2. At the direction of the City's Department of Public Works (DPW), appropriate permits must be obtained for sediment control if disturbing more than 5,000 square feet to accommodate the installation of modular classroom facilities on each of the respective school sites.

ANALYSIS:

Property Descriptions

Twinbrook Elementary School is located at 5815 Wainwright Avenue, in the R-60 (Single Family Detached, Residential) zone. Based on information provided, the school was initially constructed in 1952 and today is located on approximately 10.15 acres. The school is bound to the north and west by a mixture of institutional, commercial, and office land uses, to the east and south by single-family detached residential dwellings. Vehicular access to the school site is provided primarily via Wainwright and Ardennes Avenues. The existing school is approximately 442,134 square feet in size and serves grades pre-kindergarten thru 5.

Thomas S. Wootton High School is located at 2100 Wootton Parkway, in the R-150 (Medium Density Residential) Zone. The school when originally constructed in 1970 was approximately 154,837 square feet in size. The school was renovated, modernized, and expanded in the Spring of 1997 thru the Fall of 2000. The school site is approximately 27.5 acres in size, with vehicular access onto Wootton Parkway. The school property is bound to the north by single-family detached dwellings, Robert Frost Middle School to the west, and farther south and east by single-family detached dwellings. Today the existing school is approximately 295,620 square feet in size and serves grades 9 thru 12.

Site Use & Project Proposal

In the summer of 2004 the applicant (Montgomery County Public Schools – MCPS) plans to install modular/portable classroom buildings on the school sites discussed in this staff report. The modular classroom buildings are needed to accommodate the specific needs of the respective schools, for the academic 2004-05 school year. The applicant has affirmed in the submission of the application requests, that the proposed modular classrooms are being installed at both schools based on programmatic needs of the schools, i.e., modular classroom buildings being installed in order to reduce classroom sizes and accommodate an increase in teaching staff. The modular classrooms being installed on the subject school sites are 864 square feet (24' x 38') in size and approximately 10 feet in height. These modular/portable classrooms buildings accommodate an average of 25 students and a teacher. The building structures are of wood frame construction and are "handicapped accessible" units. Based on information provided, for the 2004-05 academic school year, the respective schools are projected to have the following total student enrollments and teaching levels: a) Twinbrook Elementary School - student

enrollment of 608 and 29 staff members, and b) Thomas S. Wootton High School – student enrollment of 2,340 and 199 staff persons.

Since public schools are permitted in respective residential zones only by grant of special exception, it is inferred from the Zoning Ordinance that installation of modular and/or portable classroom building facilities represent an expansion of these institutional uses, thus requiring special exception approval. In order to install the modular buildings as proposed, the applicant requests that the special exceptions be granted as submitted.

Applicable Sections of the Zoning Ordinance & Staff Assessment

In accordance with Section 25-296 of the Ordinance “publicly owned and operated buildings” (public schools) are permitted in the R-60 zone by grant of special exception. In accordance with Section 25-338 of the Ordinance, the Board of Appeals shall not grant any petition for special exception unless it finds from a preponderance of the evidence of record that:

1. The proposed use does not violate or adversely affect the Master Plan (the Plan), Zoning Ordinance, or any other applicable law; and

The schools subject to these submitted special exception requests, have existed at their current locations beginning as early as the 1950s and as recent as the early 1970s. Review of the site plans indicate all the modular classroom buildings comply with applicable development requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. If approved as requested, all modular buildings must be duly inspected for applicable building and safety code compliance and obtain occupancy permits from the City’s Inspection Services Division, as required by the City’s Zoning Ordinance. The Plan’s land use designation of the sites is for “public buildings and facilities” usage. It is inferred from the Ordinance that these special exception land uses are deemed appropriate in the residential zone if it can be demonstrated that these educational institutional uses will not adversely impact neighboring land uses. In order for the special exceptions to be granted as requested, the application requests and accompanying site development plans, shall not violate or adversely affect the Ordinance, the Plan, or other applicable law. The site plans as submitted must comply with applicable development standards of the Ordinance, i.e., building setbacks from property lines, building lot coverage, building height restrictions, etc.

2. The proposed use at the location selected will not: a) Adversely affect the health and safety of residents or workers in the area; or b) Overburden existing public services, including water, sanitary, sewer, public roads, storm drainage and other public improvements; c) Be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or the neighborhood; and d) Change the character of the neighborhood in which the use is proposed, considering services currently required, population density, character, and number of similar uses; and

Both of the school sites are served by public water and sewer services provided by the City of Rockville. There is no evidence that any of the sites’ water and sewer, electric, gas, or other

relevant utilities will require upgrade and/or retrofitting in order to serve the recently installed modular classroom buildings. As a condition of approving the subject special exception requests, staff has recommended the applicant work with the City's Department of Public Works to determine what sediment control management techniques will be utilized. However, according to all available information, there is no evidence the installation of these modular classroom buildings will adversely impact or overburden existing public utility services within the site area.

As previously noted, all of the school sites have frontage on public roadways/streets. The applicant's representative has affirmed that the modular buildings that will be installed on the respective school sites are to accommodate an increase in teaching staff and reductions in classroom size. Relative to the subject schools, there should be little if any substantive increase in vehicular traffic generated from those school sites, because the proposed modular classroom buildings are intended to reduce class sizes, and not due solely to an increase in student enrollments.

Due to their long standing, physical presence in the communities in which they are located, the character of the various neighborhoods, will not be materially altered by the installation of the modular classroom buildings that are now located on each of these public school sites. As noted, both of the subject schools have existed in their current locations for over 25 years. Staff has found no evidence that the modular/portable buildings will be detrimental to the use and future development of abutting land uses. The modular buildings will be installed so that they are either within close proximity of the main school building and/or they are sited adjacent to already existing modular classroom building/s.

The subject schools will continue to operate much as they have over the past several years, i.e., hours of operation, academic offerings to its students, parent-teacher conferences, student extra curricular activities, etc.

3. The proposed use complies with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance that are applicable thereto.

The subject special exception requests are submitted in accordance with Section 25-296 of the Ordinance. Since all county public schools are deemed to be "publicly owned and operated buildings," which are allowed in the subject residential zones only by grant of special exception, installation of additional building structures are deemed to be an expansion of these special exception land uses. The applicant's submission of the subject special exception requests, reflects MCPS's attempts to comply with this fundamental requirement of the Ordinance. Based on the information provided, the requests as submitted are found to comply in spirit and intent of all applicable requirements of the Ordinance.

Based on all of the noted factors, staff finds adequate justification to recommend Special Exceptions SPX2004-00344 and SPX2003-00345 be approved subject to the conditions referenced on pages one and two of this staff report.

COMMUNITY NOTIFICATION PROCESS

Notification cards were sent to property owners within the subject site areas in which the schools are located, informing them of the application requests and pending Planning Commission meeting and Board of Appeals public hearing, where the requests will be publicly heard and considered. A list of addresses is contained in the projects' application files for public review and inspection.

List of attachments:

Attachment A – Authorization Letter

Exhibit 1 & 2 – Twinbrook E.S. Site/Building Layout

Exhibit 3 & 4 – Wootton H.S. Site/Building Layout



Twinbrook E.S.



Wootton H.S.